



## Week 1 Assignment

### Overview

Welcome to EDLD 5301, an Action Research course. The course has been designed to further address your transformational leadership skills as you engage stakeholders in an effort to make a dramatic difference in the lives of students, staff and the community as you prepare them for life in our ever increasing diverse global village. The professors are committed to helping you learn the skills to conduct action research that will improve your campus, district and larger community throughout your participation in this program, and more importantly, provide the knowledge and skills to continue applied research as part of your lifelong learning and professional development.

As most of you know from your experiences and expertise, there are no programs, and for sure no single product, that can solve all of the conflicts and problems, or even address all of the issues faced everyday in our public schools. You also know that our Lamar program has focused on developing leadership knowledge and skills that we sometimes say need to be in your “leadership toolbox” to help you improve your campus, district, and self. Two of the resources that we selected for your leadership toolbox are the texts for this course, *Leading with passion and knowledge: The Principal as Action Research* by Nancy Fichtman Dana, and *Examining what we do to improve our schools: 8 steps from analysis to action* by Sandra Harris, Stacey Edmonson, and Julie Combs. We will reference these texts as the Dana text and the Harris et al. text. There are many action research education texts, and we have listed some of those, along with other resources, in the Resource section of this course. But we think these books will be excellent sources to help us achieve our larger goal. That goal is expressed succinctly by Michael Fullan in the Foreword to this text. Commenting on the value of action research texts, Fullan states:

*Dana has produced a book steeped in passion and strategy that makes action research not an ad hoc project but, rather, a way of life. This project is not a linear one. It is about becoming and continually cultivating what it means to become the best possible leader you can,* (Dana, 2009, p. x).

Harris, Edmondson and Combs state:

*These (8) action steps provide a framework for examining school improvement that is an ongoing thoughtful evaluation of the work. We believe that when this framework is implemented, schools can be improved,* (Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2010, p. xvi).

We hope you can sense we feel passionate about this action research initiative and the value to you as a leader! As an overview, we hope to address the following in Week One:

### Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Understand the nature and purpose of practitioner inquiry and action research.
- 2) Know the benefits of action research for campus or district leaders.

- 3) Be familiar with the steps to develop a blog and share action research progress.
- 4) Understand the importance of using “reflective techniques” to enrich communication on the blog and in monitoring the action research project.

Performance Outcomes:

- 1) Examine definitions of practitioner inquiry, action and applied research and write a definition of action research that is a synthesis of these definitions.
- 2) Review examples of action research in educational settings and provide a written analysis of the benefits of action research.
- 3) Develop a blog focusing on sharing information and insights on the action research project and communicate to other students the needed information for accessing the blog.
- 4) Using the blog, engage in reflective practice and share what is being learned about your action research plan, process, and progress. Submit comments to at least three other class member's blogs.

## Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 1 Assignment.

Tasks	Accomplished	Proficient	Needs Improvement
	The evidence suggests that this work is a "Habit of Mind." The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.	The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.	The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.
Why do action research?	Student clearly answers both questions thoroughly, and answers reflect reference to the readings. <b>(3 Points)</b>	Student answers both questions, but does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the responses. <b>(2 Points)</b>	Student answers only one question and does not provide any indication of applying the reading to the answer. <b>(1 Point)</b>
Identifying action research in educational settings	Student clearly identifies three examples of action research in educational settings and provides a thorough response describing the benefits of action research. <b>(3 Points)</b>	Student identifies only two examples of action research in educational settings and responds with a brief description of the benefits of action research. <b>(2 Points)</b>	Student incompletely responds to the two activities – either does not identify 3 examples or fails to describe the benefits of action research, but the student does make some response, although incomplete. <b>(1 Point)</b>
Action Research Blog	Student follows directions on building a blog, posts the blog name and URL address; writes at least a 200 word description of what the student has learned about action research; and describes how leaders can use blogs. <b>(3 Points)</b>	Student does <b>two</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a blog with name and URL address</li> <li>• Writes a 200 word description of what he or she has learned about action research</li> <li>• Describes how leaders can use blogs</li> </ul> <b>(2 Points)</b>	Student does <b>one</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a blog with name and URL address</li> <li>• Writes a 200 word description of what he or she has learned about action research</li> <li>• Describes how leaders can use blogs</li> </ul> <b>(1 Point)</b>
Reflection in Action Research	Student clearly answers both questions thoroughly, and answers reflect reference to the readings.	Student answers both questions, but does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the responses, or only	Student answers only one question and does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the answer.

	<b>(3 Points)</b>	partially answers one of the questions. <b>(2 Points)</b>	<b>(1 Point)</b>
<b>Assignment Mechanics</b>	Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. <b>(3 Points)</b>	Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. <b>(2 Points)</b>	Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. <b>(1 Point)</b>

**Week One Assignment, Part 1 – Why do action research?**

Based on the reading from the Dana text, pp. 1 – 15 and Harris et al., pp. 5 - 7, answer the following questions:

1. What is administrative inquiry or action research?
2. How does action research differ from traditional educational research?

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

As Dr. Arterbury stated in this week's lecture, "action research inquiry requires a systematic approach to collecting data and solving a problem." Action research is where you take a problem you are actively trying to decipher and research to find new strategies as a solution to solving the problem outlined in the research. Action research can be accomplished by a group. Action research is defining a problem and seeking a solution through research which will usually cause a shift of practices.

Traditional research uses outside experts instead of using information that can be gathered within the practitioner's environment. There is also a collaborative aspect to the inquiry for action research. In traditional research, the practitioner uses the results from other experts for their findings.

**Week One Assignment, Part 2 – How does action research work in educational settings?**

From the Dana text, What are some contexts that are ripe for principal inquiry?, pp. 19 – 25, and the article, Action research: An Effective Instructional Leadership Skill for Future Public School Leaders, answer the following questions:

1. Give at least three examples of action research in educational settings.
2. Describe the benefits of conducting action research.

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

University Coursework is where principals will use coursework while taking courses at a university to develop professional development for their schools. Through the coursework the principal could use the time to do their action research.

In district meetings with principals, superintendents can use action research to try to recreate bonding experience that happens amongst students who are classmates going to school together. The superintendent might devote the time the principals work on district meetings to working on action research. A part of this would entail sharing principal findings.

Action research encompassing leadership teams entails a principal having specific teachers and assistant principals work on action research. They will usually share problems, responsibilities, and decision making. The “teams are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations (Dana 2009).” Leaderships can develop into the next type of research setting which is a professional learning community.

Professional learning communities connect groups of professionals to learn from practice. This group is organized and will use small groups which a can be faculty members and utilize protocols to stay focused about student work and learning. These communities can have six to twelve members who meet regularly.

Conducting action research is specifically beneficial for an educational setting because the practitioner decides what will make an impact on their school. Action research is defining a problem and seeking a solution through research which will usually cause a shift of practices. Action research is specifically designed in a way to enhance collaboration in finding information.

### Week One Assignment, Part 3 – Building a Blog on Action Research\*

Some of you may have built a blog in EDLD 5352, or in another context. We wish to thank Dr. Kay Abernathy, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Ed Tech Leadership Master's at Lamar, for helping us to learn to build blogs. In this course, we are requiring you to build a blog where you can share your action research project and progress, as well as learn from reading others' blogs on action research. To accomplish building a blog, we ask that you:

- Access the video, "Blogs in Plain English" by entering the following address in your web address bar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN2I1pWXjXI>
- View "Blogs in Plain English" as preparation for this assignment.
- Enter the following address in your web address bar: [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com).
- Read the information about the site.
- Click "Create a Blog." Complete the information required to use the site, including the selection of a username and password. (If you already have a Google account, you can enter your username and password at the top of the home page.) Check the box to accept the terms of service, and click "Continue" to move to the next step.
- After creating your blog account, click "Name Blog."
- Select a title for the blog (example: Jo Ann's Action Research Journeys or something a little more creative) and a blog address URL (example: <http://yourname.blogspot.com>). Click "Continue" to move to the next step, "Choose a Template."
- Choose a template for your blog, then click "Continue."
- When the "Your Blog Has Been Created" screen appears, click "Start Blogging."
- On the screen provided, write a description of what you have learned about action research and how you might be able to use it. This description should be at least 200 words.
- Next write an analysis of how educational leaders might use blogs – 25 words or more are recommended.
- Also, read your Dana text, Data Collection Strategy 7: Reflective Journals and/or Blogs, pp. 87 – 89
- **\*Note on Blog Sharing:** The Dana text also discusses the power of sharing action research projects and progress on pages 149 – 151, and offers the following link to educational blogs: <http://supportblogging.com/Links+to+School+Bloggers>
- Be sure to post your blog information below:

Your Blog's Name	Your Blog's URL
Going Beyond 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills	<a href="http://knightl.blogspot.com">http://knightl.blogspot.com</a> direct link to week 1 reflection: <a href="http://knightl.blogspot.com/2010/11/action-research-week-1.html">http://knightl.blogspot.com/2010/11/action-research-week-1.html</a>

**Week One Assignment, Part 4 Reflection in Action**

From the Dana text, please read, How do I find time to engage in inquiry as a principal?, pp. 15 – 19, and from your EDLD 5311 text, *School leadership internship*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, read Reflection in Action, pp. 104 – 107, and answer the following:

Describe why reflection is an important skill in leadership. Why is reflection an important aspect of action research?

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

As educational leaders it is important that we reflect on our work. To be honest, we can't remember all of the scholarly research we read or conduct and reflection is a fantastic way of utilizing the information just covered so that when we want to remind ourselves of practices we can easily go over our reflections. Another reason for reflection is for sharing with other colleagues our findings. We can share our responses in a written format but if we want to have a global impact on the action research we are conducting, blogging is a fantastic way of sharing action research findings. When you are engaged in inquiry it makes reflection purposeful. Another use of reflection is with our students. What a great way to model great writing to our students than for them to be involved in our own reflective practices.